

Fredericksburg Arts Commission Meeting
Thursday, September 3rd, 2009
City Hall Conference Room

Attendees: Kerry Devine, Rochelle Grey, Julie Perry, Florence Ridderhof, Peter Scelfo, George Solley, Kathleen Walsh, Debbie Klein, Kevin Bartram, and Pat Thalman.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the August 6th meeting were presented. Peter Scelfo made the motion to approve the minutes and Kathleen Walsh seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Peter Scelfo reported that there were no expenses for the month. The Commission has a total of \$15,000 in its treasury.

Public Comment

There were no members of the public in attendance.

Reports

Long Term Planning Committee – Peter Scelfo

Peter Scelfo reminded the Commission of the presentation by the committee on the 19th of September at the Courtyard by Marriott downtown from 9am-1pm. He also asked for comments on the first section of the document and explained that the committee would be presenting the Goals and Objectives portion at the event on the 19th.

Arts Festival Committee – Kevin Bartram

Kevin Bartram reported that the festival committee would be making its big presentation in October. He also informed the Commission that the group has been meeting and as a part of October's presentation would be presenting two festival options for the Commission at large to select from as event planner Sue Henderson and the committee move forward for the fall 2010 event. George Solley asked Dr. Bartram if, in light of the cancellation, of the Fredericksburg Area Museum's fall event if someone from the museum could come to hear the committee's presentation in October. He responded that all were welcome to hear the presentation but that it might make more sense to wait until the Commission has decided its event structure and then invite the group in to see where partnerships could be facilitated. Debby Klein then asked when the next Festival Committee meeting was going to be held and Kevin Bartram said he would get back to her with that information.

Old Business

Discussion of JumpstArt Procedure – Kevin Bartram

Kevin Bartram passed out the JumpstArt grant program description from the EDA and a Public Art Selection procedures document that Roy Jarnecke had compiled for discussion. It is stated in those documents that the EDA wishes to fund up to three public art projects annually up to 20% of their annual grant funding.

Florence Ridderhoff asked about this number and whether or not the Arts Commission had to submit three projects or could it be more or less than three.

Kerry Devine responded that the number of projects would be based on the size, scale and expense of the projects compared with revenue generated in that fiscal year.

Julie Perry then passed out disposable cameras to encourage Commission members to document possible spaces/locations for the potential projects. In the distributed documents a January deadline for grant consideration was presented. The group spent the next portion of the meeting commenting on the feasibility of this timeline. Kerry Devine asked Julie Perry to please check on the firmness of that date. Rochelle Gray said she didn't feel that January was possible if you backed up all the adjudicating and advertising necessary to achieve that timeline. Kathleen Walsh agreed. Much discussion followed.

Pat Thalman asked George Solley and Kerry Devine their perspective on possible locations to consider. Florence Ridderhoff said we really couldn't pick a location as an Arts Commission without the knowledge of what property was city owned and available for public art. Kerry Devine responded that for our initial projects we should be focusing on gateways and public parks which are all city owned. In an effort to speed up the process with the tight EDA deadline George Solley and Kerry Devine agreed to select the first round of possible locations to be advertised and present them at the next meeting.

Peter Scelfo asked the Commission about the idea of purchasing Art that is being decommissioned. He suggested it might be a way to secure a normally higher priced piece of art at a more reasonable fee. Pat Thalman said she felt it was important to use local artists. Kerry Devine and George Solley added that they appreciated Peter Scelfo's perspective but, at least for our first programming attempt we should focus on local artists exclusively.

It was decided that for the October meeting (in addition to Kerry Devine and George Solley selecting potential sites) Roy Jarnecke, Pat Thalman and Florence Ridderhoff would work on the Selection Procedures document. There were suggestions of inviting local artists Bill Harris and Gabriel Pons to participate in this short term committee. Pat Thalman agreed to contact these artists to encourage their input in this valuable process.

Arts and Culture District – George Solley

Julie Perry and George Solley presented the Commission with a series of downtown maps to facilitate the discussion about Arts and Cultural Districts in the City of Fredericksburg. George Solley explained that City Staff has met, the City Attorney Kathleen Dooley has drafted some preliminary documents, and that the City Council was now awaiting guidance from the Arts Commission about what we think should be incentivized and where.

Kathleen Walsh asked about what incentives were available and did we have any guidelines from either the attorney or City Council. George Solley responded that staff has had conversations about incentivizing with admissions taxes and BPOL taxes, but that some taxes were off limits by state law. He also explained that in reference to geographical location it's really about where arts activities are currently located and where we might want them to be in the future. Julie Perry then brought up as a third point of clarification that the Arts Commission or City Council will eventually have to decide what constitutes an Arts related business. Much discussion followed.

During the Incentives discussion Pat Thalman brought up some of the permitting issues that *Art First* encountered during their recent move and suggested there might be room for incentives involving permits. In addition, the loosening of signage restrictions and even the idea of allowing street performers in the Arts and Cultural district came up. Kerry Devine brought up the UMW brackets currently displayed on the light poles in the historic district and Julie Perry said discussion was already underway between the University and city staff about how to best utilize that signage option. Peter Scelfo said he believes that along the lines of signage – recognition should be an important part of the Arts and Cultural District.

During the geographic location discussion Kevin Bartram said that his research suggested the most successful Arts Districts were all located in the “heart of the downtown” and that this is extremely important for Marketing reasons. Debby Klein said the Library should be included. Peter Scelfo suggested Old Mill Park and Kerry Devine disagreed because of commercial viability. She then reminded the Commission that the purpose of the district is to attract or retain arts related businesses. Individual Arts Commission members each drew their suggested district on a map and gave them to George Solley to consolidate.

Kevin Bartram encouraged the group to do some independent research about Arts and Cultural Districts before the next meeting. George Solley said he would coordinate the comments, notes, and maps from this discussion and report back at the next meeting.

Report on Art Inventory Plan – Kevin Bartram

Kevin Bartram reported that he checked with the UMW galleries and intern office in reference to the Arts Commission using a student intern to coordinate an Art Inventory Plan. He said he did not receive an enthusiastic response. The other coordinators and professors did not feel it was a good project for students because of the administrative nature and their lack of expertise in art appraisals.

Homegrown Festival

Although not on the agenda the Fredericksburg Area Museum's Homegrown Festival did come up in conversation at this meeting. George Solley informed the Commission that the festival has been officially cancelled for this year.

New Business

Agenda for Commission retreat for LT Plan on 9/19 – Peter Scelfo

Peter Scelfo reminded commission members that the presentation of the strategic plan was scheduled for Saturday, September 19th from 9am-1pm. The first half of the document was previously presented and comments due ASAP. He informed the group that at the September 19th presentation the committee members will be going over the goals and objectives for the strategic plan as well as the Mission, Vision and Values that led the group to those goals. Additional discussion will happen at the October and November meetings with final draft to present and ratify for December meeting.

Pat Thalman asked if the plan would be open-ended. Peter Scelfo responded that there would be room for modifications and restructuring but that the hope was the document would not be amended to fit the proposed program of work but that the plan would instead drive the program of work and focus the Arts Commission's efforts. Julie Perry and George Solley added that the plan was not intended to be incredibly specific.

Discussion of Downtown Storefront Initiative – Kevin Bartram

Kevin Bartram reported on the Downtown Development Commission's meetings and concerns about vacant store fronts in the retail district. He said conversations at the meeting revolved around ideas such as banners in empty windows or even art displays. Pat Thalman said that Beverly Coates is currently displaying work in an open store front and that it is mutually beneficial for her and the landlord. Kathleen Walsh said we need to be careful that we are not advocating for spaces that will not represent the art/artist well. She said things like lighting, space, referral notes etc. could make or break the arrangement. Pat Thalman responded that it would be best to coordinate directly with individual owners as DRMI did with the Christmas Trees. Kevin Bartram said he will report back to the Downtown Commission.

News from UMW and the Arts – Kevin Bartram

Kevin Bartram proceeded to give the Commission an overview of new Arts related projects at UMW. He told the group of long-term plans for a concert hall

style performing arts center. Those plans have not been articulated in any concrete way but it is on the horizon for the University. The more immediate plans involve the Anderson Convocation Center to be completed during Eagle Village construction. It would seat 2500 people and be a full-use facility mainly for athletic events and touring artists. The Anderson Center would be available for rent and is scheduled to be completed in 2010. Another new performing arts space in the works is a black box theater next to Pollard Hall on campus. Site work for that space has already been completed. It will have 500 seats in traditional black box style.

The second topic of discussion under UMW News was some issues of public perception. Kevin Bartram wanted to discuss Dodd Auditorium and the perception that the University does not want outside groups to use that space. He said that Dodd auditorium continues to be available to the public with a rental fee of \$3000.00, but that the reason many groups have been unsuccessful getting on the calendar is a staffing limitation with Dodd Auditorium's one stage manager. Peter Scelfo asked if there was anything the commission could do to assist the University in altering this long-standing public perception and Kevin Bartram responded that until the state hiring freeze was over he didn't see that being a reality.

Lastly, Eagle Village wants to establish a weekly music series once construction is complete but that is all 'up-in-the-air' at this time. Also in discussion, but not under development is an amphitheater in Stafford County by Duff-Greene park that would also be owned and operated by UMW.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, October 1st, 2009 at 7pm in the City Hall Conference Room.

Adjournment

Peter Scelfo moved for adjournment, Florence Ridderhoff seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.